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EUROPEAN APPROACHES TO STABILITY AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

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Introduction

The new strategic environment has introduced Europe to a broad range of security threats both inside and outside its borders. Some analysts have suggested that since continent-wide stability has been a priority dating back to the era immediately following the Second World War, it is only natural that the EU would want to assume a prominent role in the resolution of crises within the Union's current borders. This perspective stops short of several, perhaps more pressing, strategic considerations. There are compelling reasons for European involvement in conflict resolution, irrespective of the Union's geography.

The Caucasus and the Black Sea region are plagued by border disputes, a lack of democratic government, a flourishing trade in small arms and narcotics, and many other threats to peace and stability. In the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict seems far from a peaceful resolution. In 2003 Iran disclosed that it had a nuclear power program whose scope and intent put it in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Despite an initial willingness to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Teheran seems to have paid little heed to appeals for compliance with the conditions set down by the international body. At the same time, Turkey's evolving democracy raises the thorny question as to whether the Muslim state's wish to be admitted into the EU will be granted.

These issues will almost certainly impact on the stability of the EU. Refugee migration from conflict-prone areas, criminal activity, undemocratic political practices, and the proliferation of conventional and unconventional weapons can compromise stability. The need to assure access to the oil and natural gas deposits of the Caspian Sea will figure prominently among EU's economic interests.

The paper will address the strategic challenges posed by the Caucasus, the Black Sea region, and the Middle East, and how Europeans are involved. It will also address the question of Turkey's relationship to the EU. Properly managed, this relationship can assist Europeans in meeting their strategic goals. Turkey can serve as an example of how Islam can mesh with democracy and modernity beyond Europe's borders.

To better understand the methods of European participation, the paper will first highlight some of the key points of European strategic doctrine.

Traditional Approaches to Security in Europe

Since the end of the Second World War, Europeans have favoured negotiation and institutional engagement as a means of addressing instability on the continent. In recent years, the relationship between the EU members and so-called 'rogue' states has been complex, with Europeans attempting to encourage responsible behaviour by offering 'carrots' such as trade links and diplomatic courtesies. In general, relations are less acrimonious than those between the 'rogues' and the United States. Some analysts have observed that the "more complicated relations with Iran and Iraq, and almost normal relations with North Korea, make European states less likely to engage these states [o]n the battlefield".[1]

Europe's economic prosperity and the maintenance of stability are complementary. Membership in the Union has tremendous appeal to candidate states and to those who are not yet ready for membership, as it would allow them access to the larger European market. In turn, Europeans hope that economic cooperation will create a collaborative attitude in the resolution of disputes between new members. The awareness of new and/or persistent threats, and the contemporary aversion to military confrontation, will compel the EU to continue employing this 'soft power' approach to fostering security on its peripheries.

Many believe that the nature of relations between the EU and 'rogue' states make the possibility of a large, state-sponsored terrorist attack unlikely. However, Europeans do not assume that they are completely insulated from danger by virtue of their economic power and moderate foreign policies. A vulnerability to 'rogue' states and hostile non-state actors is frequently acknowledged. Europeans are keenly aware that "international regimes have failed to halt, never mind reverse, the proliferation of missile technology to (and from) North Korea, Iran, Iraq and others".[2] European intelligence agencies, such as Germany's Federal Intelligence Service, have found

that it is increasingly difficult to control trade in small arms, and that WMD pose a threat to the continent.[3] Accordingly, Europeans have taken steps to revise their security strategy in an effort to make it more relevant and effective.

The New European Perspective

Plans to forge a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) have shown little progress since the goal was first articulated in the provisions on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty of 1991. The policy received mention at subsequent EU summits and bilateral meetings, but the stop-and-go policy development process has been largely unproductive. To get beyond this inertia, the heads of state and government signed A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy (hereafter the European Security Strategy), during the December, 2003 European Council summit. In addition, the EU members will sign the Constitution Treaty for Europe on 29 October of this year and ratify it at a later date. The constitution envisions several changes in security and defence policy. These include unanimous implementation of CFSP (except when members states cite compelling reasons for opting out); a solidarity clause between members (and between members and non-members) in the event of a terrorist attack or a natural disaster, and; the modernization of the continent's security and defence infrastructure. The latter is intended to make defence policy more applicable to the post-9/11 security environment, and to make provisions for a continental arms procurement agency, as well as a common defence budget separate from the Union budget. In this way, Europeans hope to share collective security and defence burdens more equitably.

The strategic direction for the EU is contained in the European Security Strategy. This document highlights the mutually reinforcing factors of economic cooperation and security. The broad strategic outlook is dictated by a consensus in Europe that solving violence by force alone is a realist anachronism which fails to address systemic problems. European pro-negotiation analysts cite the forced regime change, and subsequently failing attempts at restoring peace and order, in Iraq as an example. According to the European Security Strategy, "[s]ecurity is a precondition to development. Conflict not only destroys infrastructure, including social infrastructure; it also encourages criminality, deters investment and makes normal economic activity impossible".[4] A more effective method of conflict prevention and management should include political, economic and military means.

European Security Strategy marks the first time that the Union members have clearly articulated the threats facing them. Europe's strategic priority list consists of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime.[5] The discussion below will illustrate these threats in concrete terms and show how Europeans are involved in addressing them.

The Caucasus and the Black Sea region

The complex strategic architecture of the Caucasus has led some analysts to liken it to the Balkans.The fall of the Soviet Union and its imposed regulatory political structure have made the region's independent states (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and non-independent areas (Ossetia, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan) highly unstable.

The non-independent areas of the Caucasus are fraught with "[c]ontested borders, mixed national and ethnic groups, enforced migration, economic deprivation, widespread unemployment, authoritarian regimes, bad governance [as well as,] poverty corruption, organized crime and territorial claims".[6] There are also several 'frozen armed conflicts': one between the separatists of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the central authorities in Georgia, and one between the Armenian separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

In addition, the southern part of Caucasus is known for the production and distribution of illegal drugs. What has come to be called 'the Balkan route' accounts for much of the heroin that enters Western Europe. Opium is produced in the Helmand and Nangarhar provinces of Afghanistan and is converted en route via Iran or through Pakistani Baluchistan. It is then shipped to Turkey and eventually the Balkans. The funds raised through trans-shipment are suspected to be the major source of support for the insurgents in the region.

The region has been flagged as a hot-spot for the trade of small arms and components for the manufacture of WMD. Weak law enforcement agencies and the geographic inaccessibility of much of the region make it an important transhipment point for weapons procured by Chechen rebels.[7] When combined with the lack of stable, accountable government in many of the smaller republics, the presence of illegal weapons may cause ethnic tensions to catch fire.

The EU has important interests in the Black Sea region (comprising Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) and the Caucasus. The rich natural gas and oil deposits in the Caspian Sea, and the Caucasus states surrounding it, represent a significant energy resource. These oil and gas deposits are estimated to comprise, respectively, 3% and 4% of world's total and are expected to exceed the 2002 output of Venezuela by 2010.[8] For Europeans, access to the energy resources coupled with fears of having to deal with the implications of localized conflict provide incentives to help put out the political fires which flare up in these regions.

To this end, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has been involved in negotiations on the resolution of the conflicts in South Ossetia, and the Nagorno-Karbakh territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The scope of OSCE involvement has increased to include supporting democratic standards in human rights and election monitoring. To intensify the pace of conflict resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karbakh, the OSCE established the Minsk Group (chaired by France, Russia and the US) in 2001.

In addition, the OSCE is actively monitoring Russia's treatment of Chechen fighters in Georgia. The organization performs a vital role by enhancing contacts between Russian and Georgian border guards, and by obtaining information on the situation on the ground, thereby lessening the chance of a major confrontation between Russia and Georgia.[9] In the aftermath of the Beslan school siege in which hundreds died, this role may become more important. Russian President Vladimir Putin may employ harsh measures to thwart future atrocities, and in doing so lure Georgian-based Chechens into another round of attacks.

The Middle East

The conflict between Palestinians and the Israelis is one of the world's longest and most complex. The struggle is characterized by virulent hostility and is based on territorial claims that seem irreconcilable.

The European Security Strategy lists the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a strategic priority. To this end, the Europeans have pressured the Palestinian Authority (PA) to denounce the use of violence as a political tool. The Europeans hope that insistence on bringing the PA around to a more institutionalized and democratic way of governing will temper recourse to violence, which invariably provokes Israeli retaliation. The reform of the PA envisions a transition from a liberation movement to a government.[10] A legitimate governing body may restore faith in the democratic process through openness and accountability, and may also lend momentum to the creation of a Palestinian state by putting an end to, what has effectively become, a culture of violence among the Palestinians. To be sure, a responsible government would also represent a more legitimate recipient of EU development funds. Europeans hope to discourage young Palestinians from joining terrorist groups by improving living standards.

As can be expected, criticism has been levelled at the EU based on suspicions as to how these funds are allocated. Some allege that as long as the PA is in power the money is likely to end up in the hands of militant groups such as Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade. These apprehensions are perhaps not entirely groundless since, traditionally, the EU has put little or no conditions on the assistance it renders. To counter this criticism the EU could make donations contingent on substantive progress towards democracy and legitimate governance. Parallel to this, it could insist that the Palestinian Legislative Council distribute the funds and that the distribution be subject to outside audit.

Successful mediation the Arab-Israeli conflict hinges on impartiality. As it stands, although a good portion of the Israeli population identifies with the European cultural heritage, the EU's seemingly preferential treatment of Palestinians has weakened relations between the EU and Israel. The EU might, therefore, engage Israel in more frequent talks to encourage dialogue with moderates in the PA. To encourage Israeli flexibility the EU could leverage its economic power by prohibiting Israeli goods made in the Occupied Territories from entering the EU on preferential terms.[11]

To further regulate the climate in the region, the EU created the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995. The EMP is meant "to be complementary to the Middle East peace process by providing a framework through which, [...] parties to the conflict would be able to build up trust and institutionalize their relations in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres as well as in the field of security".[12] The overall goal is to move towards a peaceful solution, based on conditions weighty enough for both parties to abide by the terms of the agreement. In the case of the Palestinians, ending the use of violence as a political tool, coupled with demonstrable progress towards the creation of a democratic government could be the signposts by which donors are supposed to regulate their assistance. Regarding Israel, more open talks about proportionality in Israel's response to the Palestinian violence could be a requirement.

Another area of involvement for the Europeans is Iran. The disclosure of Iran's uranium enrichment program to the IAEA created apprehensions about Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. In contrast to America's rejectionist approach to Iran's nuclear program, Europeans have attempted constructive engagement. Foreign ministers of Europe's "big three" (France, Germany, UK) have used positive incentives (i.e. the promise of closer economic cooperation) and disincentives (withdrawal from trade negotiations) to communicate to Iran that violating international non-proliferation rules would be penalized. The three European governments have made it clear that progress on the trade and cooperation agreement (TAC) depends on cooperation on the nuclear issue.

Initially, constructive engagement seemed to bear fruit. The ministers agreed to continue talks on the TAC if Iran met IAEA conditions. Iran agreed to fully disclose its nuclear activities and uranium supplier information and to suspend its uranium enrichment activities. In addition, Teheran promised to sign a protocol allowing for full inspections in the future. Since then, Teheran has made no progress in meeting IAEA conditions. The US has expressed concern that Iran is continuing its plan to develop nuclear weapons and has called for tougher measures against it. Proponents of more measures maintain that diplomacy has been proven ineffective and that harsher measures against Iran may be necessary in the future.

The IAEA maintains that the diplomatic route has not yet been exhausted and has given a provisional deadline of November 2004 for Iran to meet its conditions. Recently, the EU has proposed to give Iran nuclear technology on the condition that it halt uranium enrichment activities altogether, but there have been no formal agreements. Should Iran decline the offer, analysts suspect that most EU members will lean in favour of the US proposal to go to the UN Security Council to seek economic sanctions against Iran.

Europeans hoped that dealing with Iran via positive engagement would succeed. They argue that engagement, as opposed to isolation or the use of force, can reduce mutual suspicion and lead to a peaceful, voluntary regime change. As they see it, there is room for purpose-driven negotiations, as long as the 'carrots' that are being dangled are desirable, and diplomatic engagement eschews a more confrontational path. But Iran illustrates the weakness of Europe's insistence on benign negotiation, forgoing any measure of compellence. The shortcomings of this method are such that states like Iran may simply appraise the rewards of an economic relationship as too meagre in comparison to other potential rewards, and decline to cooperate further. Negotiation backed with a possibility of graver consequences may be more effective in dealing with states where negotiation alone seems to show little promise.

A Special Case: Turkey

Turkey has long been receptive to the prospect of EU membership and has undertaken a series of impressive reforms to meet the membership criteria. Doubts about Turkey's ability to stay on the democratic and progressive path still linger in Europe, as witnessed by the recently aborted attempt to pass a law outlawing adultery. But on balance, Turkey has made considerable progress towards liberalization, and for this reason

Europeans hope that it can act as a model of democratization and modernization for other states.

On 6 October, 2004 the European Commission gave provisional approval for prospective membership negotiations with Turkey. The decision came at the end of a review of Turkey's progress in entrenching democracy and improving human rights, as stipulated in the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership.[13] Nonetheless, Turkey is not expected to achieve full membership status for another decade.

Some EU citizens worry about the voting power of a Muslim state in a fraternity of nations with Christian antecedents. But the potential strategic benefits associated with the inclusion of a democratic, pro-Western, secular and moderate Muslim state within the Union should far outweigh any apprehensions about Islam, Turkey's relative poverty, and its proximity to Iraq, Iran and Syria. Welcoming Turkey into the fold would compel the Union to take a more active role in contributing to the resolution of the conflicts in the Caucasus. If Europeans worry about the synergy of Islamic extremism, anti-western attitudes and armed ethnic separatism, Turkey can be an important asset in addressing such tendencies in less democratic states. In Turkey's journey towards EU membership, spanning four decades, its progress in handling such challenges is impressive.

> In the past decade, Turkey's military leadership has grown increasingly concerned about Islamic fundamentalism, which it believes is an impediment to modernity. [...] In 1999, a group of army officers was dismissed for demonstrating an unacceptable level of piety. Every year, the High Military Council purges the military ranks of officers involved in "reactionary" activities, including religious extremism.[14]

In addition, Turkey has gone a long way in improving civilian control of the military when it appointed a civilian to be the head of the National Security Council (NSC) in 2004.[15]

Turkey has broadened its scope of minority rights. The presence of minority groups is now well recognized, and the right of broadcasting, publication and instruction in languages other than Turkish is accepted. Europeans hope that such policies will put discriminatory practices to rest and create tolerance towards diversity.

For all of the reforms that Turkey has implemented, joining the EU is a fitting reward. For many Turks the benefits of joining are clearly visible and highly desirable. Business and economic development is sure to flourish within the wider European market. Minority groups like the Kurds will be better protected in a democratic club where human rights are respected.

Conversely, it is widely felt that a refusal to admit Turkey could send a message to Turks, and, more broadly, to the entire Muslim world, that the EU cannot be trusted and is in fact opposed to welcoming a predominantly Muslim state into the Union.[16] Such a reaction might reverberate through neighbouring Muslim states and pockets of Muslim population already in the Union. By embracing Turkey, Europeans have the opportunity to metaphorically reach out to the entire Muslim world. In more practical terms, the relationship with Turkey may be a step towards the stabilization of the EU's expanding neighbourhood.

Conclusion

For the EU, managing the instabilities on its peripheries is a daunting but necessary task. The promotion of democratic values, political stability, and prosperity are Europe's main goals. Clearly, it will be difficult to promote change in a climate where institutional reform is stymied and Western values are regarded with suspicion. Nevertheless, Europeans hope that a foreign policy characterized by positive engagement and diplomatic gradualism will result in a brighter future.

Notes

[1]Justin Bernier, Daniel Keohane, "Europe's Aversion to NMD," *Strategic Review*, 29, 1 (Winter 2001), 45

[2]Gary Ackerman, Laura Snyder, "Would They If They Could?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, (May/June 2002), at www.thebulletin.org/issues/2002/mj02/mj02ackerman,html

[3]Bernier, Keohane, 44

[4]The Council of the European Union, European Security Strategy, at http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload178367.pdf, 2

[5]Ibid

[6]Mustafa Aydin, Europe's Next Shore: the Black Sea Region After EU Enlargement, European Union Institute for Security Studies, (June 2004), 6, at www.iss.eu.org

[7]Svante E. Cornell, "The Growing Threat of Transnational Crime", The South Caucasus: a Challenge for the EU, European Union Institute for Security Studies, (December 2003), 35, at www.iss.eu.org

[8]See: Energy Information Administration, US Department of Energy, http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian.html

[9]Domitilla Sagramoso, "The UN, the OSCE and NATO", The South Caucasus: a Challenge for the EU, European Union Institute for Security Studies, (December 2003), 80, at www.iss.eu.org

[10]Stephen Everts, "How Europe Can Help the Middle East Peace Process," *Centre for European Reform Bulletin*, 28, (February/ March 2003), at www.cer.org.uk

[11]Everts, "How Europe Can Help"

[12]Murriel Asseburg, "From Declarations to Implementation? The Three Dimensions of European Policy Towards the Conflict," The European Union and the Crisis in the Middle East, Ed. Martin Ortega, Institute for Security Studies European Union, (July 2003), 16, at www.iss.eu.org

[13]The Copenhagen criteria include: a demonstrated stability of institutions ensuring human rights, democracy and rule of law; a functioning market economy able to meet the demands of the wider European market; and, the ability to participate in the membership obligations in the political, economic and monetary union spheres. See: Gateway to the European Union, http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/criteria.htm

[14]David L. Philips, "Turkey's Dreams of Accession," *Foreign Affairs*, 83, 2, (September/ October 2004), 88

[15]Philip Gordon, Omer Taspinar, "Turkey's European Quest: The EU's Decision on Turkish Accession", U.S.-Europe Analysis Series, The Brookings Institution, (September 2004), 2, at www.brookings.edu/fp/cuse/analysis/index.htm, 2

[16]Gordon, Taspinar, 1

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